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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
BUREAU OF BIOLOGICAL SURVEY

## THE COOT AS AN EDIBLE GAME BIRD



The American coot is a game bird that has been given so many ill-flavored names that the public has considered it of no value for the table. Use of the coot on the table, however, has been found not only to add to the variety of food but also to help in the solution of a control problem existing in some localities. Page 2 tells how to prepare a very tasty dish from the coot.

On account of damage done to their crops, rice growers wish to have extraordinary measures taken to reduce the number of coots, or mud hens, as they are sometimes known. Sportsmen also urge severe control measures, claiming that in many localities these birds compete with wild ducks for food.

Both groups of citizens overlook the fact that the American coot is classed as a game bird under the migratory-bird treaty act. The regulations promulgated under the provisions of that act afford this bird the same protection as that given to other game birds. The numbers of these birds, therefore, can be reduced only by shooting during the open seasons provided for hunting them.



Both groups of citizens seem also to have entirely overlooked the fact that the coot furnishes an excellent addition to the dining table. This bird is a cleaner feeder than many others of the birds and mammals eaten by man. Recognizing the coot as a game species, and including it in the hunting bag, may go far toward solving such problems as are presented by the bird. The coot, when properly prepared for the table, is the equal in edibility of any of our ducks. One of the field men of the Biological Survey gives the following recipe for its preparation:

#### How to Prepare and Cook

Skin the bird and cut off legs and breast. Split breast in two parts. Wash all parts thoroughly in cold water and, if desired, soak them a few hours in salt or soda water, but the soaking is not necessary, as skinned coot has no strong or unpleasant flavor. Roll the damp meat in flour and place in frying pan over a slow fire. Cover pan and allow meat to fry slowly in either bacon grease or lard. Keep pan covered, and after the meat has cooked for about 30 minutes add a generous lump of butter. Get the pan hot and then pour in a half to one cup of cold water (quantity to be gauged by size of pan and number to be served). Replace cover and allow to steam about a minute or two. Remove meat, add sufficient flour to thicken gravy, and serve.



